DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 430 663 PS 026 756

AUTHOR	Amodei, Nancy; Taylor, Elizabeth R.; Hoffman, Tom; Madrigal, Anna; Biever, Joan; Cardenas, Fred
TITLE	Professional Development of Head Start Teachers in Hispanic Communities: Effects of a Violence Prevention Curriculum.
PUB DATE	1998-07-00
NOTE	11p.; Poster presented at the NHSA National Research Conference (4th, Washington, DC, July 9-12, 1998).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Comparative Analysis; Conflict Resolution; *Faculty Development; Hispanic Americans; *Knowledge Level; Parent Teacher Cooperation; Preschool Education; *Preschool Teachers; Pretests Posttests; *Prevention; Rural Areas; Staff Development; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Student Relationship; *Violence
IDENTIFIERS	Conflict Management; *Project Head Start; Texas

ABSTRACT

Noting that early childhood education is one tool for violence prevention, this study examined the effectiveness of a preschool violence prevention program in influencing the knowledge and attitudes of Head Start teachers in a rural, heavily Hispanic, southern Texas community. Head Start teachers were nonrandomly assigned to a control group, a Long Intervention group, or a Brief Intervention group. The Long Intervention group received a 6-hour training session conducted over one day. The Brief Intervention group received two 3-hour training sessions held 2 months apart. Training in the two intervention groups was identical and included training in the following areas: effects of violence over the lifespan, teaching young children to resolve conflict peacefully, handling teacher-parent conflicts, using positive discipline, and commitment to change. Data were collected on teachers' knowledge regarding violence prevention and attitudes related to violence prevention competency, violence prevention attributes, role efficacy, and remediation competency. Eighty-four teachers completed both pre- and posttests. The results indicated that knowledge and attitudes were influenced by the training and by having had prior exposure to violence. Posttest scores in remediation competence and violence prevention attributes improved over pretest scores, with the increase greater for those in the Brief Intervention group than in other groups. Knowledge score increases were greatest for those in the Long Intervention group and for those who had previous experience with violence. Higher final knowledge scores were associated with higher final remediation competence scores. (Author/KB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 430 663

Professional Development of Head Start Teachers in Hispanic Communities: Effects of a Violence Prevention Curriculum

Nancy Amodei, Ph.D., Elizabeth R. Taylor, Ph.D., Tom Hoffman, Ph.D., Anna Madrigal, M.A.
Joan Biever, Ph.D., Fred Cardenas, M.S.W.
The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio

ABSTRACT

Youth in the U.S. are victims of, perpetrators of, and exposed to violence. A tool of violence prevention is early childhood education. Teachers of Head Start in rural, heavily Hispanic, South Texas are recruited to receive a newly developed violence prevention training. The effectiveness of that training in influencing knowledge and attitudes is tested here. Knowledge and attitudes are influenced both by the training and by having had prior exposure to violence.

INTRODUCTION

Dysfunctional behavior such as violence can be approached in reactive ways – treatment, punishment, rehabilitation, or in a proactive fashion – through prevention. According to Gullotta (1994), "Primary prevention can be defined as planned efforts to reduce (prevent) the incidence of new cases of dysfunctional behavior in a population not yet demonstrating signs of dysfunctional behavior and to encourage (promote) behaviors that are known to contribute to functional behaviors." This indicates that a good maxim for prevention is "the earlier the better."

The American Psychological Association (1993) suggests that early childhood is the time to begin. "Laying the groundwork for preventing violence begins early in a child's development... Everyone who comes into contact with the child- parents, educators, childcare providers, healthcare providers – has the potential to contribute to a child's attitudes towards violence, and propensity toward violent behavior.

Violence is learned. According to Powell and colleagues (1996), "Social Learning Theory assumes that aggression and violence are learned behaviors. Much of the learning takes place by observing and modeling the behavior of others. Providing alternative behavioral models and new knowledge can provide individuals with the justification for using them." Osofsky (1995) contends that "Education regarding the negative effects of violence exposure on children and how to help them after exposure has occurred should be part of professional preparation for all individuals coming in contact with children, including those working in day care centers, schools, law enforcement agencies, and parenting education groups." Teachers need training to understand and prevent violence (Osofsky, 1995). Programs have been developed to train children (and sometimes teachers) for grades K through 12 (Embry, Flannery, and Vazsonyi, 1996;Guerra, 1994; Wiist, Jackson, and Jackson, 1996). What is still needed according to Takanishi and DeLeon (1994) is work with teachers and children at an even earlier age: "Given the stressful conditions faced by many children and families eligible for Head Start, the critical need for preventive child and family support approaches in a comprehensive early childhood program is obvious."

PS 026756

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Nancy Amodei

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This study is a report on such a program and involves training teachers of and parents of children enrolled in Head Start. This poster presents the data derived from the teacher training program.

METHOD

The study represents a quasi-experimental design in which participants (i.e. rural Head Start teachers) were non-randomly assigned to a control group, and two intervention groups (i.e., Long intervention and Brief intervention). Participant teachers were recruited from three rural Head Start Programs located in South Texas: The Texas Migrant Council (TMC) Head Start Program, The San Felipe Del Rio Consolidated Independent School District Head Start Program (SFDR), and the Education Service Center, Region 20 Head Start Program (ESC).

Two forms of training were given: 1) A long, six-hour session conducted over one day (i.e. Long intervention); and 2) two brief three-hour (half-day) sessions held two months apart (Brief intervention). TMC teachers were recruited to be in two of the three groups of this study (i.e., the control group and the Brief intervention). SFDR and ESC teachers participated in the Long intervention.

Control group teachers completed a baseline violence prevention knowledge and attitude instrument and completed the instrument again one to two months later.

Long intervention group teachers completed the instrument immediately prior to commencement of the session and at the end of the six-hour session.

Brief intervention group teachers completed a pretest consisting of the standard attitude items and only the knowledge items that pertained to the content of the first training session. At the end of the training session they completed the knowledge items again. At the beginning of the second training session they completed the knowledge items that pertained to the second training session. At the end of the second session they completed an instrument containing the standard attitude items and the knowledge items pertaining to the second session.

The Training Curriculum

The content covered in the Brief and Long versions of the curriculum was identical. The major topics covered were as follows:

- Definitions and meanings of violence
- Epidemiology and statistics
- Effects of violence over the lifespan
- Early intervention as prevention:
    a) creating a nonviolent atmosphere in early childhood settings
    b) emotional responses of young children to violence
- Teaching young children to resolve conflict peacefully
- Handling teacher-parent conflicts
- Using positive discipline with children
- Personal anger management
- Commitment to change

The training employed an interactive, multimodal approach including the use of role-plays, visual aids, small group exercises, short video clips, problem-solving activities, and games.

Research Questions

1) Is this violence prevention training program effective in influencing knowledge regarding violence prevention and attitudes towards violence prevention?

2) Does the modality of training (brief or long) affect the effectiveness of the program?

3) Do other measured variables influence knowledge regarding violence prevention and attitudes relevant to violence prevention?

Characteristics of the Participants

N = 84 teachers who completed both pre- and post-tests (Control group = 23, Long intervention = 34, Brief intervention = 27).

	N	(%)
Females	79	(94%)
Hispanic	69	(82%)
Married	55	(66%)
Child Living in Household	58	(69%)
Greater than high school education	79	(94%)

	Median
Age	32.5
# of years working in Head Start	4
# of years in education of children	6

Scale Construction

Violence prevention knowledge and attitude scales were constructed for the present study from the pre-test responses of 102 teachers and were tested to see if they were both valid (through factor analysis, when appropriate) and reliable (using Cronbach's alpha). Scores from the scale were converted to the same metric(i.e. score
varied from 0 to 100.

Violence Prevention Knowledge. Reliability testing yielded 8 items forming a reliable scale (alpha = .56) which measured *general knowledge about violence*. *Specific knowledge about violence* was assessed by two additional items (see Table 1).

Attitudinal Scales. As a result of conducting principal components analysis with varimax rotation and reliability analysis, four attitudinal measures were constructed: *Violence Prevention Competency* (2 items; Cronbach's alpha = .67); *Violence Prevention Attributes* (4 items; Cronbach's alpha = .73); *Role Efficacy* (single item indicator); and *Remediation Competency* (single item indicator) (see Table 2)

RESULTS

1) In overall sample, the following scores were higher in the post-test than the pretest: specific knowledge (t = 2.62, p= .01), violence prevention attributes (t=3.66,p = .0005), and remediation competency (t = 2.64, p=.01) (See Table 3).

2) Results are similar when only those who went through training were examined. Remediation competency increased from 55.83 to 70.42 (t = 2.54, p=.014) as did scores on violence prevention attributes, going from 66.39 to 75.20 (t = 3.73, p =.0005).

3) When repeated measures analyses were conducted for all six measures, only one outcome measure yielded both statistically significant within and between group differences ($p < .05$). All three groups' post-test scores were higher than their pretest scores; however those who had the brief training had a much larger increase (+29) than those who were in the control group (+5) and those who had the long training (+4). Those who participated in the brief training improved more dramatically in their attitude that they could have an impact on children who live in violent families.

4) Multiple regression was performed on all outcome (post-test) variables to see if other variables in the study may have had an impact on knowledge and attitudes about violence.

The other variables examined were:

1) years of education
2) years of experience teaching children
3) impact of violence on respondent's life (converted to a scale from 0 to 100, with the latter indicating "extreme impact")

Overall, general knowledge about violence was increased primarily by two variables – having been in the long modality of violence prevention training, and violence having had a greater impact on the respondent's life (see Table 4).

Table 4: Stepwise Regression on General Knowledge about Violence

Independent Variables	B	Beta	Significance
Long Training[1]	14.646	.338	0.002
Impact of Violence	0.162	.212	.049
Constant	60.865		0.001
R^2 =.164			

With regard to the four attitudinal scales, since increase in knowledge might result in impacts on attitudes, in addition to education, experience with teaching children, and the impact of violence, post-test scores on general knowledge about violence and

specific knowledge of violence were also included in the regression equations. Only one of the attitudinal scales was influenced by any of these attitudinal variables: remediation competence (See Table 5).

Table Five: Stepwise Regression on Remediation Competence			
Independent Variables	B	Beta	Significance
General knowledge about Violence	.440	0.313	0.002
Constant	36.257		0.005
R^2 = .098			

Only general knowledge about violence had an independent influence on final remediation competence score.

As a result of these two regressions, we in effect conducted a path analysis on remediation competence (see Figure 1). Participating in the long modality of violence prevention training and having been influenced by violence in one's life both have an indirect influence on remediation competence (mediated by their influence on general knowledge about violence) and increases in general knowledge about violence have a direct impact on raising levels of remediation competence.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

1. Post-test scores in remediation competency and violence prevention attributes improved over pre-test scores. This increase in remediation competency scores was of a greater magnitude for those who participated in the brief modality of the curriculum.

2. General knowledge about violence post-test scores were increased by having participated in the long modality of the curriculum and by having had previous experience with violence.

3. Higher final scores on the general knowledge indicator resulted in higher final scores on the remediation competency indicator.

DISCUSSION

Teachers participating in the brief training improved more dramatically in their attitude that they could have an impact on children who live in violent families. Those who participated in the longer training had a greater increase in general knowledge about violence, which increased their feeling that they too could have an impact on children who live in violent families.

Years of education and years of experience teaching children have no influence on the outcome variables. However, having had previous experience with violence enhanced the likelihood that the program would increase general knowledge about violence.

The program appears to be an effective one. It enhanced both knowledge and attitudes towards violence prevention. The training modality had some impact on the outcomes. It appears that the longer modality could be seen as more effective in so far as it increases general knowledge, and that increase increases remediation competency. Educational level and teaching experience do not have an impact on this program's effectiveness. However, previous experience with violence does. Garbarino and colleagues (1992) point out that "inner city teachers and child-care professionals often have feelings and ideas about community violence, or at least they confront the threat every day." It is most probably the case that people who have experienced violence will see the salience and practicality of education about violence.

CONCLUSIONS

Violence prevention education is necessary in the early years. Teachers of young children need to be educated as well regarding violence prevention. Violence prevention education can enhance both knowledge and feelings of competency regarding dealing with violence. Further studies are needed with regard to the dynamics behind the differential effectiveness of brief versus long training. Also, additional studies are needed regarding the dynamics which lead those who have been exposed to violence to be more open to education regarding violence. As has been pointed out, 'the earlier the better." It can only be hoped that this study will help encourage further development and implementation of violence prevention curricula for both teachers and children involved in early childhood training such as Head Start.

REFERENCES

American Psychological Association. (1993). Report of the American Psychological Association Committee on Violence and Youth, Volume I. Washington, D.C.

Embry, D. D., Flannery, D.J., Vazsonyi, A.T. (1996). PeaceBuilders: A theoretically driven, School-based model for early violence prevention. Youth Violence Prevention: Descriptions and Baseline Data from 13 Evaluation Projects, 91:100. (Supplement to American Journal of Preventive Medicine, Vol. 12, No. 5.

Garbarino, J., Dubrow, N., Kostelny, K., Pardo, C. (1992) Children in Danger: Coping with the consequences of Community violence. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Guerra, N.G. (1994) Violence Prevention. Preventive Medicine, 23, 661 –664.

Gullota, T. P. (1994) The What, Who, Why, Where, When, and and How of Primary Prevention. The Journal of Primary Prevention, Vol. 15, No. 1, 5:14.

Osofosky, J.D. (1995). The effects of Exposure to Violence On Young Children. American Psychologist, Vol 50, No. 9, 782 – 788.

Takanishi, R., DeLeon, P.H. (1994) A Head Start for the 21st Century. American Psychologist. Vol. 49, No. 2 120:122.

Wiist, W.H., Jackson, R. H., & Jackson, K.W. (1996). Peer and Community Education to Prevent Youth Violence. Youth Violence Prevention: Descriptions and Baseline Data From 13 Evaluation Projects, 56:64. (supplement to American Journal of Preventive Medicine, Vol 12, No. 5).

Table One: Violence Prevention Knowledge		
Type	Correct Answer	Question
General	FALSE	Adults are mature enough to not be adversely affected by TV violence.
General	FALSE	If the child has witnessed a violent situation, it is best not to upset the child by talking about it.
General	FALSE	Violence is more of a problem to young children than to adolescents.
General	FALSE	When trying to resolve a conflict between two people, a third person should never be involved.
General	FALSE	When we talk about "outer influences," we mean the way the child acts that causes other children to be aggressive towards him/her.
General	FALSE	Once you have brought up a child's negative behavior to the parent, it is best to not discuss it again.
General	TRUE	Children may become destructive in order to identify with the perpetrator.
General	FALSE	The way we handle anger is primarily inherited.
Specific	FALSE	Touch is reassuring to children in times of crisis.
Specific	FALSE	It is helpful to shift to new activities when there is a crisis.

Table Two: Violence Prevention Attitudes	
Violence Prevention Competency	I can structure my classroom in ways to help prevent and reduce conflicts between children.
	I have the skills and resources to be supportive of children even when I am under stress.
Violence Prevention Attributes	I believe that the skills and knowledge that children develop in my classroom will help them handle crises in elementary school.
	I am satisfied with the way I handle my anger.
	I have the skills to help children who have been the victims of violence.
	I am able to help resolve conflicts with the most difficult children.
Role Efficacy	I am confident of my ability to make a difference in the lives of the children in my class.
Remediation Competency	There is little I can do to help children overcome effects of living in a violent family. (reverse scoring).

Table Three: Pre-and Post-test Means on all dependent variables (scales range from zero to 100)		
Indicator	**Pre-test**	**Post-test**
General Knowledge about violence	68.75	69.20
Specific Knowledge about violence	15.48	25.60
Violence Prevention Competency	83.84	84.82
Violence Prevention Attributes	68.68	76.04
Role Efficacy	85.42	87.20
Remediation Competency	56.02	68.07

Figure One: Path Analysis of influences on Remediation Competence